



Change Agents & Impact Assessment

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Change agents & Impact Assessment

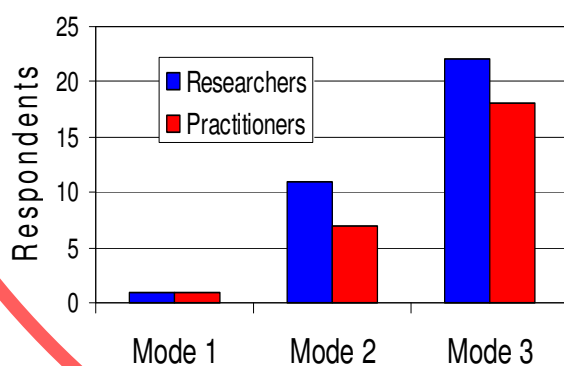
Change agents to close the gap between impact assessment science and practice

One of the challenges facing impact assessment is finding ways to work in research and practice that allow appropriate action and critical interrogation of action to enable and support sustainable change.

Change agent is seen as a way to close the experienced gap between science of IA and practice of IA. It is closely linked to current societal needs and undertaken in cooperation between science and practice. It is in this investigation understood as a combination of Mode 3 research defined by Kurek et al. (2007) and a normative framework as described by Jamison (2001).

To make green knowledge through SEA, and impact decision making, science and practice needs to be connected.

Survey at IAIA Geneva conference



A simple survey of modes of knowledge production at IAIA Geneva conference indicated a widespread self-image among practitioners and researchers of engaging in mode 3 knowledge production

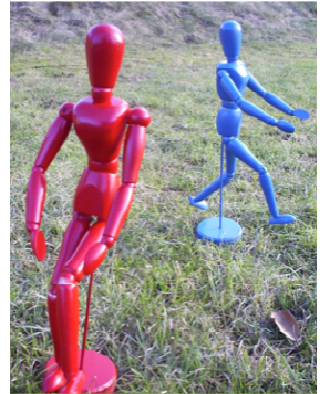
Change agent as a mode of knowledge production

Mode 1: Classic research

Knowledge is produced solely by researcher

Goals and methods of knowledge production are defined solely by researchers

Knowledge production is independent of practice in terms of economy and information



Mode 2: Entrepreneurship

Knowledge is produced mainly by researchers

Goals and methods of knowledge production are defined mainly by practice

Knowledge production is dependent in terms of economy and information – between researchers and practice

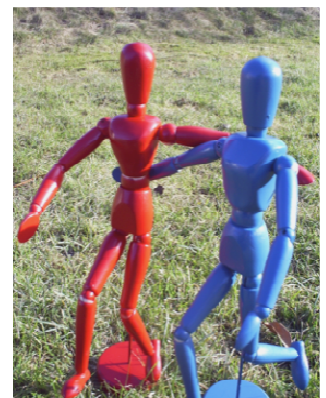


Mode 3: Change Agents

Knowledge is produced in cooperation between researchers and practice

Goals and methods of knowledge production are ongoing negotiation between researchers and practice

Knowledge production is an interdependent relation between researchers and practice



Investigating change agent potentials and roles

Cases

Case 1 concerns the first generation of SEA in relation to the national energy infrastructure in Denmark (gas and electricity).

Access to people, processes and information by participation gives possibilities for testing hypothesis

"The strength is that SEA theory is challenged by reality's diversity of asymmetrical courses and sudden political and strategic changes." (Head of Section, Energinet.dk)

Role of researcher

Helping out: The researcher is a 'critical friend' trying to change the system from the inside

The three investigated cases are cooperations between Aalborg University and external organisations, which are characterised by interdependence on economy, information exchange and engagement. At the same time, the setup of the cooperation gives the researcher organisational autonomy.

Case 2 concerns SEA of mega industry in Greenland in a system with no legislation or guidelines in place.

Ownership of outputs of autonomous research where the organisation may work as a platform for disseminating research results to society and other practitioners.

"[It] have had great impact for progress and development of the specific SEA, that Anne has 'wafted over the water' in different matters" (Head of Department, The Greenlandic Self Rule)

Taking side: The researcher develops a kind of partisanship with the society against impacts of industry

The investigation of the three cases also identifies risk and weaknesses of the approach: The external organisation needs backing from the entire organisation to fully benefit from the research; contextual changes such as change of organisational tasks may hinder the impact of the research

Case 3 concerns the Danish process of preparing river basin management plans and SEAs of these (implementing the EU Water Framework Directive)

Dialogue on direction of research and continuous "reality-check" of the research in the interaction with practitioners

"Sanne gets input for understanding everyday life and problems of the practitioners. Thereby the research study adjusts to a more societal beneficial approach." (Head of Department, Rambøll)

Giving advice: The researcher keeps an academic distance in advising the organisation with professional input

The investigation also shows that Mode 3 research is not dissociated from Mode 1 and Mode 2 research. Rather the experience is that a choice of mode suited for the specific phase of research makes it possible to utilise the advantages of each mode.

References:

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Jamison, Andrew. 2001. *The Making of Green Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press.



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